**Orange County Historical Museum**

**Volunteering Opportunities, 2021**

**Job: Organize and Research Old Files**

There is a backlog of important research and historical files and paper artifacts in the filing cabinets at the Orange County Historical Museum. These files contain vital information about Orange County families, businesses, and lives, and desperately need to be organized, documented, and potentially research for further contextual information and/or transcribed.

This work exemplifies that of an archivist/historian in a Museum, Library, Historical Society, or records office. While not glamorous, it leads to the preservation of important history, and the potential discovery of previously unknown understandings of the past with consequences for both the present and the future.

This type of work is best for those who enjoy working with historical documents and conducting historical research, working methodically and independently, and is okay with being still for long periods of time.

**Tasks:**

* Determine appropriate categories for research and historical files and paper artifacts and organize them according using best storage and preservation and conservation practices, such as separating pieces into different file folders, providing acid-free tissue paper barriers, and/or encasing pieces in archival plastic sheeting when necessary.
* Bring to the attention of Museum staff pieces that are in especially bad condition and need more specific conservative and preservative care.
* Create a spreadsheet to accurately document each research and historical file or paper artifact including condition, age, and pertinent descriptive information.
* Determine which research and historical files and paper artifacts need further contextual research conducted.
* Conduct and record research on chosen files and paper artifacts to provide contextual information for the pieces, while keeping a clear running bibliography of research sources.
* Determine which research and historical file and paper artifacts would benefit from transcription to a computer file.
* Transcribe to a computer Word document accurately and effectively certain chosen files and paper artifacts.

**Skills:**

* Thoroughness and attention to detail.
* Conducting and compiling historical research.
* Can follow instructions whether they be conveyed verbally, or written as a document or with diagrams, and is able and willing to ask for clarification when needed.
* Comfort with working independently on given tasks.
* Familiarity of use with Microsoft Word and Excel to the level where independent work can be conducted.
* Ability to type and search on the computer and use a variety of search engines.
* Ability to use scissors and tape.
* Ability to sit or to stand and bend over for extended periods of time.

**Job: Write Social Media Posts**

The Museum has been building an online social media presence through Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The Museum is in need of someone to create engaging and accurate social media posts for all three platforms on a Word document that will allow forward planning and ease of posting. This individual would be asked to create posts over the following topics:

* Individual items currently on display
  + *Please note: we would require research to be done both through the Museum’s digital catalog and other venues to ensure that all post information is clear, relevant, and accurate*
* Upcoming events or programs
* Interesting photos or documents from our archives

Along with taking photos to accompany the posts, the individual is encouraged to create short videos about the pieces (60 seconds or less in length). Memes are also a plus!

This sort of work transcends the arts and culture world to be applicable in multiple industries. The ability to understand the tone, audiences, and intricacies of each social media platform is a skill that the emerging job of Social Media Manager in any field must hone.

**Tasks:**

* Take photos of or make short videos about collection items.
* Conduct research and use information from the Museum’s digital catalog on artifacts and archival items to ensure accuracy of post content.
* Write engaging, informative, and accurate posts that adhere to our social media policy on Microsoft Word.

**Skills:**

* Understanding of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, including appropriate post tone, style, length, and audience for each platform.
* Ability to use an iPad to take photos or make short videos.
* Ability to type and search on the computer and use a variety of search engines.
* Can follow instructions whether they be conveyed verbally, or written as a document or with diagrams, and is able and willing to ask for clarification when needed.
* Comfort with working independently on given tasks.
* Familiarity of use with Microsoft Word to the level where independent work can be conducted.

**Job: Research Relevant Contextual Information for Museum Collections**

Many items in the Museum’s collection have been catalogued but do not have any pertinent contextual information. For instance, we may have a purple crocheted handkerchief, and know who it was made and donated by, but no information about what crochet is nor about the importance it may have played as either a livelihood or a hobby. Though contextual information may be broad and not necessarily apply to only Orange County, it is necessary information when putting together exhibits or conducting other research. Contextual information builds on the understanding of the social history of the time, which in turn supports narrative exhibit work, and can clarify why ownership or local provenance is so important.

We need an individual who is willing to use the Museum’s digital catalog on a read only account to choose items they are interested in researching or that appear to need contextual information added. They would conduct research, whether that be surface level or deeper depending on interest, on that item. Research information would then be compiled and saved as a Word document.

This type of work is suitable for those who have a natural curiosity about the past, and the histories of everyday people. It is also good for those who enjoy research.

**Tasks:**

* Use a ‘read only’ account on the Museum’s digital catalog to identify pieces of interest that may need contextual information.
* Conduct and record research on chosen artifacts to provide contextual information for the pieces, while keeping a clear running bibliography of research sources.
* Compile a Word document of research for use by staff.

**Skills:**

* Conducting and compiling historical research.
* Ability to type and search on the computer and use a variety of search engines.
* Comfort with working independently on given tasks.
* Familiarity of use with Microsoft Word to the level where independent work can be conducted.
* Can follow instructions whether they be conveyed verbally, or written as a document or with diagrams, and is able and willing to ask for clarification when needed

**Job: Docent, Tour Guide, and Guest Assistant**

As a public facing institution, guest assistance and comfort is a priority. Museums and heritage sites exist not just to house history, but to present it to the public. Therefore, it is imperative that the Orange County Historical Museum provide the best visitor experience possible, not just to aid their enjoyment and learning, but to also create loyal and repeat guests.

We are seeking an individual to man the desk, watch the galleries, and provide guest assistance- from answering questions about other places around town to providing short tours or interpretive materials. Please know that training and materials will be provided to the volunteer. However, we strongly encourage the individual to conduct any of their own research that interests them about our exhibits, and offer this information to the guests. **At this time we are seeking volunteers in this position for Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.**

This task addresses hospitality style jobs as well as interpretive work. Interpretation is the term given to any efforts that are made to educate in an informal and enjoyable manner that is relevant to the guests and provides not just facts but an overall depth of understanding about a topic or theme.

We are also asking for that the volunteer possibly create tour guiding materials- to use themselves when providing tours and to serve as training documents for future tour guides. With this, they are also encouraged to create mini, specialized tours which focus on certain topics within the galleries. For example, a tour and accompanying document that highlights all the musical instruments, or a tour that focuses on fashion items.

**Tasks:**

* Answer the phone within two rings, and provide answers to questions or take a detailed message including name, phone number, and time called.
* Take down guest information as much as possible, including:
  + Number of guests, basic guest demographics such as age and race, and **zip codes**
  + Encourage them to sign up for our newsletter, which will also leave a slot for them to state where they are visiting from
* Use provided Front Desk Resources binder to answer questions to the best of your ability regarding where to find genealogical information, history about the building and the museum, other heritage sites in town, or places to eat (for example).
* Monitor museum space for inappropriate guest actions, and either redirect them as necessary or call a staff member for assistance (e.g. touching items, being rude to volunteer).
* Provide basic tours and/or answer questions about artifacts on display to the best of your ability if the guest wishes. The volunteer is encouraged to read through all exhibit text to familiarize themselves with the items, and is welcome to do any further in-depth research on items that interest them to provide more personalized tours.
* Create ‘special interest’ tours and associated materials (one page hand out, written document for tour guides, etc.) for gallery objects ( ex. For the Music lover, For the Fashion Fiend, For the Politically Savvy)
* Provide interpretive materials to the guests if applicable (e.g. gallery guide, documents with further item information).

**Skills:**

* Comfort and ease with working with the general public while following hospitality best practices.
* Basic phone etiquette skills.
* Ability and interest in reading exhibit text and remembering pertinent information.
* Basic interpretive skills to convey information about the exhibits in a clear, accurate, and engaging manner.
* Can follow instructions whether they be conveyed verbally, or written as a document or with diagrams, and is able and willing to ask for clarification when needed.

**Job: Cataloging Photography Collection**

The Museum is in possession of hundreds of photographic slides, all of which need scanning and documenting. This was a project that was started over a decade ago but unfortunately fell by the wayside. Using prior documentation, the volunteer will restart and complete documentation of the project.

The volunteer would first meet with staff and original volunteers involved with the project to better understand the purpose of the task, what has been completed, and what has yet to be done. Additionally, they will discuss what themes and topics the photography collection covered in order to better categorize the data later one.

First, the volunteer will match up the hard slides to the binder documentation and previously scanned slide files, highlighting the ones that we have. The volunteer with then follow detailed instructions to scan any photographic slides not yet scanned using professional equipment, labeling each slide file with the appropriate cataloging number. As this is happening, notes must be made about particularly interesting photos that align with the Museum’s mission, or that or the Alliance for Historic Hillsborough or The Burwell School. While all digital copies of the slides will be kept on an external hard drive, only relevant physical slides will be housed on site, with the rest being returned to the government agency who had them prior to the Museum. Finally, the volunteer will go through all scanned slides, both those done before and recently, to place them in categorized file folders.

This task will give volunteers an opportunity to explore an extensive photographic collection of a local resident and see how Hillsborough has changed over the 20th century. It also provides experience with the scanning technology, and in the proper care and handling of photographic collections.

**Tasks:**

* Handle photographic slides
* Use a scanner
* Scan, document, and catalog items
* Use a computer and external hard drive to save scanned copies
* Use a Word Processor to take notes on particular relevant subject matter

**Skills:**

* Familiarity or ability to learn how to use a scanner and a computer
* Familiarity with or ability to learn how to carefully handle photographic material
* Comfort with working independently on given tasks.
* Familiarity of use with Microsoft Word to the level where independent work can be conducted.
* Can follow instructions whether they be conveyed verbally, or written as a document or with diagrams, and is able and willing to ask for clarification when needed.